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Report on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the audit of the existing special arrangements governing the recruitment of temporary assistance staff in the language services across the four main duty stations

Summary

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 62/225, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the existing special arrangements governing the recruitment of temporary assistance staff in the language services across the four main duty stations, namely, United Nations Headquarters, the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Office at Vienna and the United Nations Office at Nairobi. Under the special arrangements, temporary assistance posts in the language services are funded primarily by the regular budget through a unique funding mechanism established specifically to supplement the permanent conference-servicing resources of the four duty stations, which, to varying degrees, are programmed below the actual levels that are required and therefore become insufficient, particularly during peak periods.

The conditions of service for language specialists are governed by General Assembly resolutions 59/265, 60/236 B, 61/236 and 62/225, the United Nations Staff Regulations and Rules and the agreements between the United Nations and the International Association of Conference Translators and the International Association of Conference Interpreters.

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Findings

OIOS found that:

- There was no global approach to managing the recruitment of temporary assistance staff in the language services. In addition, there were no clear criteria, guidelines or standard operating procedures for the recruitment and management of temporary assistance staff that could be used by all duty stations. The lack of guidelines and standardized procedures could result in non-compliance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly regarding equity in recruitment and the United Nations agreements with the International Association of Conference Translators and the International Association of Conference Interpreters regarding conditions of service.

- Owing to the lack of adequate procedures and the consequent lack of transparency and consistency in rostering and selecting candidates, OIOS was unable to establish whether the recruitment of temporary assistance staff ensured that all language services were given equal treatment and provided with equally favourable working conditions and resources.

- At Headquarters, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management did not establish appropriate procedures which could be used by all duty stations in determining the professional domicile of temporary assistance staff. As a result, in a number of cases at Headquarters and the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna, contracts for temporary assistance staff were based on local conditions of service even though the staff members were recruited from countries outside the duty stations concerned.

- The pattern of recruitment of temporary assistance staff for the language services at Headquarters and the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna showed that some of the language services preferred to recruit candidates under local conditions of service, mainly because of concerns of managers of the language services about cost-effectiveness and efficiency.

- All four duty stations implemented capacity-planning exercises to determine their requirements for temporary assistance staff. However, there was no global planning process in place and the approach used differed from one duty station to another in terms of, for example, the frequency of planning, the relevance of the data used in the planning and the evaluation of capacity plans.

According to the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, the observations of OIOS that there was no global approach to managing the recruitment of temporary staff and the related policies and procedures to be used across the duty stations, and that as a result the Department could not ensure compliance with the relevant mandates of the General Assembly, are partially correct. The Department stated that an integrated global management project is a work in progress aimed at coordinating procedures, standardizing practices and sharing resources across four conference-servicing duty stations. This project includes a compendium of administrative policies, practices and procedures that have been compiled with a view to coordinating operations and standardizing practices across the four duty stations. The General Assembly also recognized that the specificities of each duty station have to be respected in order for integrated global management to be successful.

Recommendations

OIOS made six recommendations to the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management: (a) to review and update the agreements with the International Association of Conference Translators and the International Association of Conference Interpreters to ensure their alignment with the relevant General Assembly resolutions and the United Nations Staff Regulations and Rules; (b) to ensure the implementation of appropriate standard operating procedures by all duty stations in determining the professional domicile and hence the conditions of service of temporary assistance staff in the language services; (c) to establish centrally managed rosters of candidates and related standard operating procedures to be used by all language services across the duty stations; (d) to implement centralized guidelines for capacity-planning and evaluation of capacity plans; (e) to address the issue of integrating computer-assisted tools in order to ensure greater interoperability of software used by the language services across the duty stations; and (f) to implement appropriate mechanisms to ensure that the approved workday limits for retirees are not exceeded.

The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management accepted all of the recommendations and is in the process of implementing them.

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I. Introduction and background

1. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 62/225, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted an audit of the existing special arrangements governing the recruitment of temporary assistance staff in the language services across the four main duty stations, namely, United Nations Headquarters, the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Office at Vienna and the United Nations Office at Nairobi. The main objectives of the audit were to determine whether procedures were in place for identifying the requirements for temporary assistance for meetings in the language services and ensuring the recruitment of the most qualified individuals in an economical, efficient and transparent manner in accordance with relevant agreements, United Nations Staff Regulations and Rules and General Assembly mandates. The audit also sought to determine whether the recruitment of temporary assistance staff was unnecessarily skewed in favour of a certain type of appointment (i.e., local, as opposed to non-local, staff of the country of the duty station where the services were required) for certain language services. Comments made by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management are summarized below in italics.

2. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management and the units in charge of conference services management at the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi are responsible for implementing the operational activities at their respective duty stations. Furthermore, according to resolution 57/283 B, the Department is responsible for implementing policy, formulating standards and guidelines, overseeing and coordinating United Nations conference services and the overall management of resources. There are more than 50 language services and sections[1] at the four duty stations. The 2004-2005 and 2006-2007 allotments for the temporary assistance for meetings account for the four main duty stations are summarized in the table below. The account is a unique funding mechanism established under the regular budget to supplement the permanent conference-servicing resources of the four duty stations, which are, to varying degrees, programmed below the actual levels that are required and therefore become insufficient, particularly during peak periods.

Table
Summary of regular budget allotments issued for temporary assistance for meetings
(Millions of United States dollars)

Biennium	*Headquarters*	*United Nations Office at Geneva*	*United Nations Office at Vienna*	*United Nations Office at Nairobi*	*Total*
2004-2005	24.9	14.7	7.4	1.9	**48.9**
2006-2007	26.8	17.2	9.4	1.7	**55.1**

[1] At Headquarters, there are six Translation Services; one Interpretation Service, including six sections; one Verbatim Reporting Service, including six sections; one Editorial Control Section; and one Official Records Editing Section. There are six translation sections and one interpretation service at the United Nations Office at Geneva, the United Nations Office at Vienna and the United Nations Office at Nairobi, respectively.

3. All duty stations have implemented three key activities relating to the recruitment of temporary assistance staff in the language services, namely, capacity-planning, maintenance of rosters and selection of candidates. OIOS reviewed those activities for the calendar year 2007 on the premise that, if properly implemented, they can help to satisfy the need for equity expressed by the General Assembly and, more specifically, help to ensure compliance with the United Nations Staff Regulations and Rules as well as the United Nations agreements with the relevant associations for language specialists.

II. Determination of conditions of service: local versus non-local

A. Basis for determining the conditions of service of temporary assistance staff in the language services

4. The agreements between the International Association of Conference Translators for short-term translators, revisers, editors and précis-writers, and the International Association of Conference Interpreters for short-term conference interpreters, state that employment conditions of such staff shall be governed by their professional domicile at the time the employment is offered. The professional domicile of translators and interpreters who are members of, respectively, the International Association of Conference Translators and the International Association of Conference Interpreters are published in the directories and on the websites of the Associations. The agreements provide that the United Nations will request any translator or interpreter who is not a member of either of the Associations to declare his/her professional domicile when he/she seeks or accepts employment. For the purposes of the agreements, the professional domicile of an interpreter or a translator is the domicile in which the interpreter/translator considers himself/herself as local. A translator/interpreter may have only one professional domicile at any time. A translator may change his/her professional domicile only for consecutive periods of not less than one year and an interpreter may change professional domicile only for consecutive periods of not less than six months.

5. The agreements with the International Association of Conference Translators and the International Association of Conference Interpreters, which date from 1979 and 2007, respectively, apply to all United Nations agencies, funds and programmes. The agreement with the International Association of Conference Interpreters was ratified by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). However, the signature pages were missing on the copies of both of the agreements provided to OIOS. OIOS attempted to establish who signed the agreements on behalf of the Secretariat and whether they are legally binding on the Organization. However, neither the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management nor the Office of Human Resources Management was able to properly address the requests of OIOS on this matter. *The Department stated that the agreements with the International Association of Conference Translators and the International Association of Conference Interpreters were collective agreements concluded by the organizations of the United Nations common system (as employers). The negotiations were coordinated by the representatives of CEB, and the agreements were ratified by the Office of Human Resources Management. The agreement with the International Association of Conference Translators, which is*

much older (1979), pre-dates CEB, but was ratified by the precursor of CEB, namely, the Administrative Committee on Coordination, through its Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions. The special conditions negotiated in these agreements were established pursuant to staff rule 301.1 (b) and are also stated in the letters of appointment of the freelance staff.

6. In the view of OIOS, there is a need for the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, in consultation with the Office of Legal Affairs and the Office of Human Resources Management, to review and update the agreements to ensure their alignment with the relevant General Assembly resolutions and the United Nations Staff Regulations and Rules, and to determine whether a formal human resources policy needs to be promulgated for these language services staff.

B. Lack of policy and procedures to ensure compliance with the agreements with the International Association of Conference Interpreters and the International Association of Conference Translators

7. Although professional domicile is supposed to govern the conditions of service for temporary assistance staff in the language services, as indicated in the agreements, there is currently no formal human resources policy for establishing the conditions of service based on the professional domicile of the staff. For other categories of staff (i.e., non-language specialists) appointed under the 300 series of the Staff Rules, the practice within the Secretariat is to use the home address or normal place of residence in determining whether a staff member should be classified as a local or non-local recruit. However, the agreements with the International Association of Conference Translators and the International Association of Conference Interpreters provide that the professional domicile of a candidate may exclude the home address or actual place of residence of the candidate. This means that the professional domicile of a freelancer, as provided for in the agreements, may be different from his/her actual place of residence or fixed abode. Owing to the absence of a policy for establishing the conditions of service based on the professional domicile of staff, the definition of professional domicile is subject to interpretation and therefore to possible abuse.

8. There was also a lack of appropriate procedures which could be used by all duty stations to ensure compliance with the agreements with the International Association of Conference Translators and the International Association of Conference Interpreters in determining the professional domicile of staff. As a result, none of the duty stations formally established the professional domicile of their temporary assistance staff. The field for professional domicile in the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS) had been completed for some temporary assistance staff members recruited at Headquarters, while at the United Nations Office at Geneva, the field had not been completed for any of the staff members covered by the OIOS audit. The professional domicile reported in IMIS matched the home address in the induction and personal history forms of the staff member, although the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management did not confirm whether IMIS had been updated using those forms. In accordance with the agreements between the United Nations and the International Association of Conference Translators and the International Association of Conference Interpreters,

those home addresses may not necessarily represent the professional domiciles declared by the staff members.

9. Seventeen of the approximately 280 temporary assistance staff hired at Headquarters in 2007 were provided with local conditions of service, even though they had been recruited from other countries. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management informed OIOS that the United Nations had sponsored the G-4 visa applications of those staff members. At the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna, a number of staff members were provided with local conditions of service, although they had been recruited from countries outside the duty stations concerned.

10. OIOS was unable to rule out the possibility that certain staff recruited from outside the duty stations concerned had been offered, either explicitly or implicitly, and had accepted, local conditions of service. Thus, there was a risk of unfair treatment of staff, and hence a legal and reputational risk to the United Nations in the event that a staff member considered his/her rights under the agreements with the International Association of Conference Translators and the International Association of Conference Interpreters to have been violated.

III. Recruitment of temporary assistance staff

11. In its resolutions 59/265, 60/236 B and 61/236, the General Assembly requested that the Secretary-General, when recruiting temporary assistance staff in the language services, ensure that all language services be given equal treatment and provided with equally favourable working conditions and resources. In requesting the present audit, the General Assembly, in its resolution 62/225, further stressed the need for equity when recruiting temporary assistance staff in the language services. In the opinion of OIOS, a global approach to managing the recruitment of temporary assistance staff in the language services, including appropriate policies and procedures to be used across the duty stations in establishing the requirements for temporary assistance staff, maintaining rosters and recruiting the staff, would further enhance compliance with the mandates of the General Assembly and the United Nations Staff Regulations and Rules. *The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management concurred that there would be some benefits in making explicit that which is already current practice regarding the criteria for the inclusion of freelancers in temporary assistance rosters. It noted, however, that given the preference for local recruitment, duty stations are bound to be in competition for the best non-local staff, and central management of the roster does nothing to address the greater problem, which is finding ways to expand the pool of qualified freelancers. This position reflects the most responsible approach to the need to reconcile a concern with cost on the one hand, and the demands of quality on the other. All chiefs of service/section/unit are expected to follow this line of reasoning.*

A. Maintenance of rosters

12. There was no centrally managed roster of candidates for temporary assistance posts in the language services similar to the one being developed for contractual translators to be used by all duty stations in selecting candidates. There was also no

standard format for the rosters, including for the type of information required (for example, specialization, if any; professional domicile; permanent address; membership in professional associations; relationship with the United Nations — e.g., former United Nations staff member). In addition, there was no coordinated approach to maintaining rosters across the duty stations. In the view of OIOS, appropriate procedures need to be implemented for rostering and selecting temporary assistance staff in order to ensure compliance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

13. The manager of each language service and section at Headquarters, the United Nations Office at Geneva and the United Nations Office at Nairobi maintained a list of potential candidates (referred to as rosters) that was used to fill specific vacancies. The fact that the manager of each language service and section maintained his/her own roster raises the question of consistency and equity in the recruitment of temporary assistance staff. Furthermore, no rosters were used at the United Nations Office at Nairobi. Rather, interpreters were offered initial appointments after being identified on the basis of the directory of the International Association of Conference Interpreters or through referrals. Translators were identified primarily through referrals, and their initial appointments were provided subject to their receiving a satisfactory score on an ad hoc test prepared and administered by the relevant language service.

14. The procedures followed in identifying and vetting candidates for the rosters as well as for adding them to or deleting them from the rosters were not transparent and therefore did not ensure fairness in the selection process. For example, candidates were identified mainly through staff referrals, and were required to take ad hoc tests prepared and administered by the language services and sections concerned. There were no common testing standards. In addition, it was not clear how certain translation companies contracting with the United Nations had identified their staff or how such staff were subsequently vetted and put on the rosters at Headquarters and the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna.

15. Although officials of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management informed OIOS that quality was a major consideration in the recruitment of temporary assistance staff in the language services, Headquarters did not use professional associations such as the International Association of Conference Interpreters as sources of candidates for the rosters. At the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna, temporary assistance staff were initially recruited from the directories of the professional associations and were subsequently put on the rosters, subject to satisfactory performance. *In the opinion of the Department, the International Association of Conference Interpreters and the International Association of Conference Translators do not serve as accrediting bodies for interpretation or translation; rather, their membership requirements relate mainly to the number of days of contract with international organizations and, as such, are no guarantee per se of quality or competence.* However, OIOS notes that the International Association of Conference Interpreters requires that its members be competent and experienced professionals and commit themselves to abiding by a code of conduct and a set of professional standards that enable them to provide reliable, high-quality service.

16. The General Assembly, by its resolution 57/305, established special limits for retirees who are recruited under temporary assistance in the language services in

order to increase the availability of retirees to compensate for the increasingly competitive market for freelancers. A key factor in the recruitment of retirees was their availability. Although retirees were expected to be used at all duty stations, the processes followed in determining their availability were informal and not coordinated. For example, no periodic surveys of retirees and former United Nations staff were conducted to establish their availability. Instead, managers of the language services individually consulted with the retirees and former United Nations staff members.

B. Selection of staff: local versus non-local and off-site arrangements

17. The language services and sections were responsible for recruiting temporary assistance staff and deciding, at the time of recruitment, if local or non-local candidates should be selected or if off-site arrangements should be used. As annexes I and II to the present report show, there were major variations across the duty stations and language services regarding the extent to which locally recruited staff were utilized. Five of the eight language services at Headquarters, all six of the language services at the United Nations Office at Geneva, four of the six language services at the United Nations Office at Vienna and one of the six language services at the United Nations Office at Nairobi used more local than non-local recruits and off-site arrangements. *The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management stated that the pattern of recruitment (proportion of local to non-local) varies from duty station to duty station according to the availability of local freelancers. The agreements with the International Association of Conference Translators and the International Association of Conference Interpreters allow freelance staff to position themselves advantageously for offers of employment by giving them the right to declare their professional domicile in the United Nations duty station that, in their estimation, will maximize their employment. This professional domicile, as provided for in the agreements, may be different from the freelancer's actual place of residence or fixed abode.*

18. Based on rates effective as at 1 January 2007 at Headquarters, the average daily earnings, including daily subsistence, of non-locally recruited staff were about twice those of the locally recruited translators. It was also faster to fulfil requirements for temporary assistance by recruiting locally. Officials of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management at Headquarters stated that the concern for cost-effectiveness on the part of individual managers often led them to recruit locally whenever the local supply was sufficient and of the requisite calibre to meet standards of efficiency, timeliness and quality. At the United Nations Office at Geneva, OIOS was informed that recruitment targets of 70 per cent for local staff and 30 per cent for non-local staff had been established primarily as a result of concerns about cost-effectiveness. The United Nations Office at Vienna stated that the qualifications and expertise of the staff were considered first, before the issue of cost-effectiveness, although OIOS was informed that translation sections were advised that non-local recruitment should be done on an exceptional basis.

19. There were no clear criteria, guidelines or standard operating procedures to be followed by the language services across the four duty stations. As a result, the criteria used and the procedures followed in selecting temporary assistance staff differed from one duty station to another and from one language service to another.

This could result in non-compliance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly regarding equity in recruitment and the agreements of the United Nations with the International Association of Conference Translators and the International Association of Conference Interpreters regarding conditions of service.

20. Owing to the lack of adequate procedures and the consequent lack of transparency and consistency in rostering and selecting candidates, OIOS was unable to establish whether the recruitment of temporary assistance staff in the language services was fair and equitable.

IV. Planning for the use of temporary assistance

21. The requirements for temporary assistance staff in the language services and sections across the duty stations were determined through formal planning processes. Guidelines on capacity-planning methodology have been developed and published. At all four duty stations, the requirement for temporary assistance was determined based on workload statistics such as the calendar of meetings approved by the General Assembly, relevant historical data and workload standards. In addition, the workload statistics of the United Nations Offices at Geneva, Vienna and Nairobi reflected the requirements provided by the organizational units that used the language services. At the United Nations Office at Geneva, workload projections for translation and interpretation services are made by the Central Planning and Coordination Service and then used in determining the requirements for additional temporary assistance in the respective language services. The United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna conducted regular reviews to assess actual performance against projections in order to update the requirements.

22. At Headquarters, capacity plans are approved by the Departmental Management Group, comprising senior officials of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management. A single productivity standard was used for capacity-planning for all of the six translation services. However, each of the six translation services has a different demographic mix of staff members (e.g., different percentages of self-revisers), which is a factor in determining the actual productivity level. *The Department stated that the different demographic mix in the various services is already taken into account in the workload standards that form the basis of the formula for calculating capacity. By definition, a workload standard reflects the average output over time of staff at all levels. The degree of statistical refinement that would be required to reflect the specific demographic mix in a given service — which in any event changes from week to week with the arrival and departure of freelance staff — would not seem warranted. Moreover, the margin of deviation from expected output, namely, plus or minus 10 per cent, is used to compensate for such variations. In practice, the capacity of the services is almost always below the level of expected output by more than 10 per cent (owing to the difficulty of finding enough temporary assistance, especially when vacancy rates are high). There is a limit to how much rigour or mathematical precision can be built into this capacity-planning exercise, or is even desirable, since there are many imponderables, such as variations between the forecast and actual inflow of documents, the proportion of manuscripts that present special problems or difficulties, and so forth. Adjustments are made in planning on the basis of experience. This is precisely the kind of mature and seasoned judgement that managers are expected to provide.*

23. In the view of OIOS, the Department needs to refine its guidelines for capacity-planning and the evaluation of capacity plans, including the establishment of a reasonable cycle for the review and revision of workload standards. In addition, there have been no periodic reviews performed on the actual output versus planned output, or reassessments of the planning basis used. Two types of evaluation would be necessary: (a) when a request for the recruitment of temporary assistance staff is made, the need for the request should be validated; and (b) an assessment of actual productivity against projections should be used to revise the planning basis when necessary.

24. Headquarters and the United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna used, to some degree, computer-assisted tools in capacity-planning. At Geneva and Vienna, for example, the following tools were used:

(a) Electronic Documents Registration, Information and Tracking System (e-DRITS);

(b) Interpreter assignments programme (APa);

(c) Web calendar (for the provisional timetable at the United Nations Office at Geneva);

(d) E-conference portal (at the United Nations Office at Vienna);

(e) Documents Control and Productivity Monitoring System (DCPMS) (at the United Nations Office at Vienna);

(f) E-Meets (at the United Nations Office at Vienna).

25. The tools referred to in subparagraphs (a) to (e) above are supposed to be integrated into the e-Meets system to facilitate automated planning and scheduling of meetings. The e-Meets system was designed to connect the four main duty stations in order to ensure standardization and optimization of resources at those duty stations. However, the desired level of integration has not been reached. The United Nations Offices at Geneva and Vienna informed OIOS that they were making strides in addressing the issue of integration in order to ensure greater interoperability of the e-Meets system with other related software used by the language services.

V. Monitoring of the limits for former staff members in receipt of pension benefits

26. Section VI of General Assembly resolution 57/305 on human resources management specifically covers the recruitment of temporary assistance staff, in particular limitations on the recruitment of former United Nations staff in the language services. In that resolution, the Assembly set the maximum allowable number of workdays at 125 days per calendar year for retirees and eliminated the previous practice of using monetary amounts, which were frequently revised to accommodate cost-of-living adjustments, to limit the recruitment of retirees in the language services. The purpose of the resolution was to increase the availability of retired language specialists to compensate for the increasingly competitive market for freelancers. However, administrative instruction ST/AI/2003/8/Amend.1, which is intended to provide guidance on the implementation of General Assembly

resolution 57/305, requires the use of a monetary limit in addition to the mandated maximum of 125 workdays. *According to the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, the benefits of hiring retirees as opposed to non-retirees include the need to balance the recruitment of new freelancers with that of experienced staff and avoidance of the lead time needed for training new freelancers, which may have an impact on the output of the services.*

27. At Headquarters, where more than 60 per cent of the workdays of temporary assistance staff were attributed to retirees and former United Nations staff, the language services complained that the interpretation of General Assembly resolution 57/305 by ST/AI/2003/8/Amend.1 reduces the availability of retirees by approximately 7.2 weeks per calendar year, since the calculation made by the Office of Human Resources Management includes weekends, which are paid but not worked. However, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management recognizes that that scenario does not apply in all cases. For example, the availability of a former staff member is not necessarily reduced when the monthly salary rate is used in calculating the staff member's earnings, since the monthly rates already take weekend days into consideration.

28. *The Department stated that it has raised the issue of limits on the earnings of retirees with the Office of Human Resources Management on numerous occasions over the years, most recently in a meeting on 15 May 2008 with the Officer-in-Charge, Division for Organizational Development, Office of Human Resources Management.*

29. The Department also did not implement adequate mechanisms to ensure that the approved limit for retirees was not exceeded. It relies on retirees to provide information about their earnings from the Secretariat and the common system when they are recruited at any duty station. It stated that each duty station monitors the earnings of retirees based on the information that they provide. The United Nations Office at Vienna uses the Nucleus system for monitoring the number of workdays and the amounts paid to retirees at the four duty stations. However, that system has not been replicated at other duty stations.

VI. Recommendations

30. OIOS made the following recommendations with a view to improving the management of the recruitment of temporary assistance staff, including capacity-planning, rostering and selection of candidates and the determination of the conditions of service. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management accepted all six recommendations.

Recommendation 1

31. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, in consultation with the Office of Legal Affairs and the Office of Human Resources Management, should review and update the agreements with the International Association of Conference Translators for short-term translators, revisers, editors and précis-writers and the International Association of Conference Interpreters for short-term conference interpreters to ensure their alignment with the relevant General Assembly resolutions and the United Nations Staff Regulations and Rules,

and determine whether a formal human resources policy needs to be promulgated for those language services staff.

32. *The Department accepted recommendation 1, stating that a revision of the agreement with the International Association of Conference Translators, which dates back to 1979, was long overdue but had not been actively sought by the Association. From the perspective of the United Nations, numerous recent changes relating to the employment of temporary staff, particularly the introduction of the off-site arrangement for non-local staff and the possibility of telecommuting by temporary local staff (which will become a critical necessity during the implementation of the capital master plan, since sufficient office space has not been provided for all temporary staff in the swing space), warrant a comprehensive review and renegotiation of the agreement.*

Recommendation 2

33. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management should establish appropriate standard operating procedures that could be used by all duty stations in determining the professional domicile and hence the conditions of service of temporary assistance staff in the language services.

34. *The Department accepted recommendation 2, stating that it had already put in place procedures at Headquarters for the determination of professional domicile, which would be promulgated at other duty stations shortly.*

Recommendation 3

35. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management should establish centrally managed rosters of candidates and related standard operating procedures to be used by all language services across the duty stations to ensure that the rostering and selection of candidates are transparent and equitable. The procedures should identify the criteria and guidelines for selecting candidates and adding them to or deleting them from the rosters and the type of information required for the rosters.

36. *The Department accepted recommendation 3, stating that a globally coordinated status report would be presented at its June 2009 coordination meeting, exploring the possibilities for the establishment of a central roster for the tracking and management of freelance and temporary staff in all language groups. In the meantime, owing to concerns about the benefits of such a roster given the work involved, the Department will use the experience gained from the centrally managed roster for contractual translation staff, which should be fully operational later this year, to determine the optimal configuration and use of such a database.*

Recommendation 4

37. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management should further reinforce and refine its guidelines for capacity-planning and evaluation of capacity plans to be used across all duty stations and language services to ensure the effective and efficient use of temporary assistance resources.

38. *The Department accepted recommendation 4, stating that it agreed that centralized guidelines for capacity-planning and evaluation of capacity plans would assist in better delivery of services. However, factors such as differences in market*

conditions, workload specificities (e.g., timing of delivery) and local duty station specificities should also be considered, not just for the purpose of effective and efficient use of temporary assistance resources, but also to meet operational needs such as timeliness and quality of service. At the June 2008 coordination meeting, a task force was created to establish workload forecasting and capacity-planning for text-processing, copy preparation and proofreading, reproduction and distribution in consultation with all duty stations. An evaluation of the existing methodology of workload forecasting and capacity-planning and a global summary report on harmonizing workload forecasting and capacity-planning in all areas of conference services will be presented at the June 2009 coordination meeting.

Recommendation 5

39. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management should address the issue of the integration of computer-assisted tools in order to ensure greater interoperability of the e-Meets system with other related software used by the language services across the duty stations.

40. *The Department accepted recommendation 5, stating that the global information technology initiative launched in 2006 would lead to a global standardized approach to support decision-making and real-time access to data and closer collaboration and interaction among duty stations to streamline and harmonize conference processes; and promote interoperability and efficiency as well as align more effectively with the information technology standards and strategies of the Secretariat. The three global projects launched under the initiative had made substantial progress. It was envisaged that the global reporting data warehouse under project 1 would establish common statistical standards and a codification structure to support performance indicators and performance management. A prototype for global and local reports was expected to be completed by December 2008. The meetings management systems under project 2 were expected to be completed in December 2009, and a prototype for the documents management systems under project 3 was expected to be completed in October 2008.*

Recommendation 6

41. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management should implement appropriate mechanisms to ensure that the approved workday limits for retirees are not exceeded.

42. *The Department accepted recommendation 6, stating that it would like to implement monitoring mechanisms to ensure that the approved limits were not exceeded. However, the current functionalities of IMIS did not permit systematic monitoring by the Department of all United Nations earnings of retirees; that functionality should be included in the requirements document of any enterprise-wide application developed to replace IMIS.*

(*Signed*) Inga-Britt **Ahlenius**
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services

Annex I

Summary of the distribution of actual days worked in 2007 among local, non-local and off-site temporary assistance staff by duty station and language service

(Percentage)

	Headquarters			*United Nations Office at Geneva*			*United Nations Office at Vienna*			*United Nations Office at Nairobi*		
Language service	*Local*	*Non-local*	*Off-site*	*Local*	*Non-local*	*Off-site*	*Local*	*Non-local*	*Off-site*	*Local*	*Non-local*	*Off-site*
Arabic language services	80	18	2	85	15	0	56	20	24	5	95	0
Chinese language services	94	4	2	66	14	20	45	55	0	0	100	0
English language services	70	28	2	65	31	4	46	38	17	58	42	0
French language services	40	46	15	78	19	3	82	8	10	26	74	0
Russian language services	47	43	10	82	10	8	81	10	9	1	99	0
Spanish language services	43	36	21	54	20	26	64	14	22	5	95	0
Editorial Control Section	61	12	27	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Official Records Editing Service	96	0	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Note: Although off-site arrangements were made with individuals who were predominantly non-local to the duty stations concerned, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management is of the opinion that they should be treated separately in the table. The Department stated that the use of off-site arrangements has helped to reduce non-local recruitment, while at the same time ensuring that the duty station in question is not deprived of the services of qualified non-local freelancers. An off-site arrangement is used whenever the operational requirements (volume and nature of the workload and expected turnaround times) at the time of recruitment permit the dispatch of work to off-site locations.

Annex II

Detailed distribution of actual days worked in 2007 among local, non-local and off-site temporary assistance staff by duty station and language service

	Headquarters							*United Nations Office at Geneva*						
	Number of workdays				*Percentage*			*Number of workdays*				*Percentage*		
Language service	*Local*	*Non-local*	*Off-site*	*Total*	*Local*	*Non-local*	*Off-site*	*Local*	*Non-local*	*Off-site*	*Total*	*Local*	*Non-local*	*Off-site*
Arabic Verbatim Reporting Service	844	—	50	894	94	0	6	—	—	—	—	0	0	0
Arabic Interpretation Service	1 352	96	—	1 448	93	7	0	588	190	—	778	76	24	0
Arabic Translation Service	2 373	929	83	3 385	70	27	2	798	62	—	860	93	7	0
Total/average	**4 569**	**1 025**	**133**	**5 727**	**80**	**18**	**2**	**1 386**	**252**	**—**	**1 638**	**85**	**15**	**0**
Chinese Verbatim Reporting Service	568	—	12	580	98	0	2	—	—	—	—	0	0	0
Chinese Interpretation Service	432	108	—	540	80	20	0	166	54	—	220	75	25	0
Chinese Translation Service	1 392	—	39	1 431	97	0	3	619	111	236	966	64	11	24
Total/average	**2 392**	**108**	**51**	**2 551**	**94**	**4**	**2**	**785**	**165**	**236**	**1 186**	**66**	**14**	**20**
English Verbatim Reporting Service	624	—	29	653	96	0	4	—	—	—	—	0	0	0
English Interpretation Service	1 090	201	—	1 291	84	16	0	751	71	—	822	91	9	0
English Translation Service	1 295	1 002	74	2 371	55	42	3	1 582	1 027	143	2 752	57	37	5
Total/average	**3 009**	**1 203**	**103**	**4 315**	**70**	**28**	**2**	**2 333**	**1 098**	**143**	3 574	**65**	**31**	**4**
French Verbatim Reporting Service	436	43	—	479	91	9	0	—	—	—	—	0	0	0
French Interpretation Service	617	342	—	959	64	36	0	857	31	—	888	97	3	0
French Translation Service	1 374	2 418	907	4 699	29	51	19	3 405	1 029	143	4 577	74	22	3
Total/average	**2 427**	**2 803**	**907**	**6 137**	**40**	**46**	**15**	**4 262**	**1 060**	**143**	**5 465**	**78**	**19**	**3**
Russian Verbatim Reporting Service	854	—	22	876	97	0	3	—	—	—	—	0	0	0
Russian Interpretation Service	322	—	—	322	100	0	0	380	23	—	403	94	6	0
Russian Translation Service	69	1 132	251	1 452	5	78	17	2 394	308	273	2 975	80	10	9
Total/average	**1 245**	**1 132**	**273**	**2 650**	**47**	**43**	**10**	**2 774**	**331**	**273**	**3 378**	**82**	**10**	**8**
Spanish Verbatim Reporting Service	800	—	—	800	100	0	0	—	—	—	—	0	0	0
Spanish Interpretation Service	417	—	—	417	100	0	0	649	30	—	679	96	4	0

Language service	Headquarters							United Nations Office at Geneva						
	Number of workdays				Percentage			Number of workdays				Percentage		
	Local	Non-local	Off-site	Total	Local	Non-local	Off-site	Local	Non-local	Off-site	Total	Local	Non-local	Off-site
Spanish Translation Service	1 113	1 942	1 128	4 183	27	46	27	1 591	817	1 079	3 487	46	23	31
Total/average	**2 330**	**1 942**	**1 128**	**5 400**	**43**	**36**	**21**	**2 240**	**847**	**1 079**	**4 166**	**54**	**20**	**26**
Editorial Control Section	520	101	230	851	61	12	27	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Official Records Editing Section	265	—	12	277	96	0	4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

Language service	United Nations Office at Vienna							United Nations Office at Nairobi						
	Number of workdays				Percentage			Number of workdays				Percentage		
	Local	Non-local	Off-site	Total	Local	Non-local	Off-site	Local	Non-local	Off-site	Total	Local	Non-local	Off-site
Arabic Verbatim Reporting Service	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Arabic Interpretation Service	161	310	—	471	34	66	0	31	325	—	356	9	91	—
Arabic Translation Service	725	—	375	1 100	66	0	34	—	210	—	210	0	100	—
Total/average	**866**	**310**	**375**	**1 571**	**56**	**20**	**24**	**31**	**535**	**—**	**566**	**5**	**95**	**—**
Chinese Verbatim Reporting Service	—	—	—	—	0	0	0	—	—	—	—	0	0	—
Chinese Interpretation Service	—	397	—	397	0	100	0	—	76	—	76	0	100	—
Chinese Translation Service	466	175	—	641	73	27	0	—	—	—	—	0	0	—
Total/average	**466**	**572**	**—**	**1 038**	**45**	**55**	**0**	**—**	**76**	**—**	**76**	**0**	**100**	**—**
English Verbatim Reporting Service	—	—	—	—	0	0	0	—	—	—	0	0	0	—
English Interpretation Service	306	330	—	636	48	52	0	28	—	—	28	100	0	—
English Translation Service	259	135	210	604	43	22	35	356	275	—	631	56	44	—
Total/average	**565**	**465**	**210**	**1 240**	**46**	**38**	**17**	**384**	**275**	**—**	**659**	**58**	**42**	**—**
French Verbatim Reporting Service	—	—	—	—	0	0	0	—	—	—	0	0	0	—
French Interpretation Service	305	117	—	422	72	28	0	213	—	—	213	100	0	—
French Translation Service	1 129	15	182	1 326	85	1	14	—	591	—	591	0	100	—
Total/average	**1 434**	**132**	**182**	**1 748**	**82**	**8**	**10**	**213**	**591**	**—**	**804**	**26**	**74**	**—**
Russian Verbatim Reporting Service	—	—	—	—	0	0	0	—	—	—	0	0	0	—
Russian Interpretation Service	430	14	—	444	97	3	0	7	83	—	90	8	92	—
Russian Translation Service	551	105	105	761	72	14	14	—	431	—	431	0	100	—
Total/average	**981**	**119**	**105**	**1 205**	**81**	**10**	**9**	**7**	**514**	**—**	**521**	**1**	**99**	**—**
Spanish Verbatim Reporting Service	—	—	—	—	0	0	0	—	—	—	0	0	0	—
Spanish Interpretation Service	462	15	—	477	97	3	0	—	40	—	40	0	100	—
Spanish Translation Service	524	202	330	1 056	50	19	31	13	233	—	246	5	95	—
Total/average	**986**	**217**	**330**	**1 533**	**64**	**14**	**22**	**13**	**273**	**—**	**286**	**5**	**95**	**—**
Editorial Control Section	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Official Records Editing Section	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—